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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CZECH FOREIGN MINISTER
SCHWARZENBERG'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Graber for reasons 1.4 b+d

11. (C) Summary: Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg pays his first official visit to Washington this week. The Czechs are a dependable and engaged, albeit small, ally in NATO and the EU. Schwarzenberg himself is a committed transatlanticist. It is important for us that Schwarzenberg be able to show the Czech Parliament and public that Czech concerns are taken seriously in Washington. Schwarzenberg's impressive Washington schedule (in addition to Secretary Rice he will see Secretary Chertoff, Secretary Gutierrez, NSC Advisor Hadley, and hopefully several Senators and Representatives) is already a clear demonstration of USG engagement. Schwarzenberg will focus on the two priority issues on our bilateral agenda: missile defense and visas. We also recommend raising with Schwarzenberg Cuba and a Czech PRT in Afghanistan. End summary.

12. (C) Schwarzenberg has been Foreign Minister since January 12007. He previously served as Senator, and through the 1990s was an advisor to then-President Vaclav Havel on foreign affairs. Schwarzenberg belongs to one of Bohemia's hereditary noble families. He fled the country under communism and lived for many years in Vienna. During this period he provided support to the Czechoslovak underground and became close to Havel. Schwarzenberg's passion is human rights and he has used his various political positions -- as Presidential advisor, Senator, and now Foreign Minister -- to shine light on international abuses. Schwarzenberg was one of two elected European officials expelled from Cuba last year after he tried to meet with dissidents there. While formally elected to the Senate on the ticket of the small, liberal Civic Democratic Alliance party, Schwarzenberg is one of four ministers in the current cabinet appointed by the Green Party. A committed transatlanticist, Schwarzenberg works very closely with Deputy PM Alexandr (Sasha) Vondra, the former Foreign Minister and former Czech Ambassador to the U.S.

Missile defense

13. (C) Schwarzenberg is a solid supporter of the U.S. proposal to place a missile defense (MD) radar on Czech territory. While his Deputy, Tomas Pojar, has the lead on day-to-day MD coordination, Schwarzenberg has engaged in the debate, particularly with parliamentarians. He has also traveled to the site of the proposed radar facility. As a popular minister, Schwarzenberg is likely to become the leading Czech public "face" on MD as we move into the negotiating phase. However, Schwarzenberg's position is somewhat sensitive since he is formally representing the Green Party in the cabinet, and the Greens are the only part

of the current coalition with significant concerns about MD. By the same measure, Schwarzenberg's continued presence in the government should be helpful in terms of support from the Greens when it comes time for a parliamentary vote on the MD agreements.

14. (C) In Washington Schwarzenberg will be looking for assurances on the possibility of linking the U.S. MD facility to NATO, which is the main requirement of the Greens and of the opposition Social Democrats if they are to vote in favor of MD. It will be important for Schwarzenberg to be able to tell Czech MPs and the public that Washington is receptive to Czech concerns. A joint appearance by Schwarzenberg and Secretary Rice in front of television cameras will carry huge

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weight back home; it would counter accusations by MD skeptics that the Czech leadership is simply rolling over for the Americans. The meetings in Washington come between the April 19 NAC and the April 23 visit to Prague of MDA Chief General Obering. All three, combined with progress in Moscow, should give a significant boost to our joint efforts to relaunch the Czech public debate on MD.

Visas

15. (C) According to MFA staff, Schwarzenberg's goal on visa waiver is to be able to provide assurances to the Czech Parliament and public that the Administration is solidly behind legislative reform that would pave the way for Czech entry into the visa waiver program, and to assess sentiments on the Hill. The Czechs fully understand that the U.S. legislative process is unpredictable. We expect Schwarzenberg will use his meetings largely to express appreciation for USG efforts to reform the visa waiver

program, and also to stress the importance of success in these efforts to maintaining (and rebuilding) public support for the United States in Central Europe. The Czechs have been very supportive of the new security measures that are proposed as part of the visa waiver reform package. At the same time, the Czechs are aware that the proposed new measures are controversial in EU member states that are already in the program. The Czechs have been privately critical of moves by the German EU Presidency to take control of the visa issue, and no doubt Schwarzenberg will be using his meetings to dispel any perception that the Czechs and other new EU members are not in favor of the USG proposals.

Afghanistan

16. (C) Schwarzenberg and Czech Defense Minister Parkanova were in Kabul on April 16 for the formal reopening of the Czech Embassy in Afghanistan and to visit Czech troops. The Czechs have taken small but consistent steps to respond to Allied requests for increased engagement in Afghanistan, including eliminating most caveats on their troops in country. The government is moving forward with plans to take over a PRT in 2008. Their current focus is on Lowgar province, near Kabul, although this is not yet a final decision. The Foreign Ministry has been more supportive of the PRT than the Defense Ministry. Schwarzenberg should be thanked for his support to date and encouraged to continue with PRT planning and other Czech engagement.

Cuba

17. (C) Schwarzenberg will be interested in discussing the future of Cuba and how the Czechs can work together with the USG to support a peaceful transition on the island, including through a more effective EU policy. Among EU members the Czechs are considered the most strident opponents of Spain's

policy of engaging with the Castro regime. They work closely with the Poles, the Dutch and others who believe the EU should continue to isolate the regime and support dissidents.

Schwarzenberg has personally long supported efforts by Czech NGOs and the government to provide the Cuban opposition with support and lessons learned from the Czech experience. He was expelled from Cuba last year, while visiting as a Senator, when the Cuban authorities belatedly realized that he intended to meet with dissidents. On April 26 Schwarzenberg will address the Berlin meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, a group founded by former Czech President Havel.

Kosovo and other issues

18. (C) Schwarzenberg will travel directly from the U.S. to the April 23 monthly EU Foreign Ministers (GAERC) meeting. The Czech views on most issues on the EU agenda are generally in line with U.S. positions. Specifically, the Czechs are supportive of the Ahtisaari recommendations for Kosovo, and of a firm EU position on Iran. The Czech voice at the EU table can be strengthened by reviewing some of these issues with Schwarzenberg during his Washington meetings.

19. (C) Three additional items Schwarzenberg may raise at his meetings at State and elsewhere:

-- UNSC candidacy: the Czechs are competing for a UN Security Council seat starting in 2008. Their competition is Croatia. Schwarzenberg will travel from Washington to New York for meetings with UN officials.

-- NATO candidacy: the Czechs have nominated former Defense Minister (currently Deputy to Deputy PM Vondra) Jiri Sedivy for the position of NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defense Policy and Planning.

-- Energy security: the Czechs are very concerned about Central European dependence on Russian energy, and particularly the fact that Lukoil is the leading bidder to purchase ConocoPhillips' Czech operations; they hope that the USG will intervene directly with ConocoPhillips to prevent the sale to a Russian bidder.

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